

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
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INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, RH, UK
SUBJECT: THE GUARDIAN ARTICLE ON RHODESIA

1. THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE BY JONATHAN STEELE, DATELINED
WASHINGTON, MARCH 8, APPEARED IN THE MARCH 9 ISSUE OF
"THE GUARDIAN".
BEGIN TEXT: MR. CALLAGHAN WILL FLY TO WASHINGTON TOMORROW
FOR TALKS WITH PRESIDENT CARTER AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF
INCREASED BRITISH AND AMERICAN PESSIMISM ABOUT AN EARLY
RESOLUTION OF THE RHODESIAN PROBLEM.
US INTELLIGENCE ANALYSTS ADMIT THAT MR. SMITH IS
HOLDING OUT BETTER THAN EXPECTED IN THE GUERRILLA WAR.
THEY HAVE NOW INCREASED THEIR ESTIMATES OF THE LIKELY
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TURNING POINT ON THE BATTLEFIELD FROM SOME TIME THIS YEAR
TO AT LEAST ANOTHER TWO OR THREE YEARS HENCE.
AT THE SAME TIME, UNDER THE NEW JOINT ANGLO-AMERICAN
APPROACH, THE DIPLOMATIC FOCUS HAS SHIFTED ITS PRIORITY
TOWARDS THE RHODESIAN NATIONALISTS. THE HOPE IS THAT
THEY CAN BE PERSUADED TO SINK THEIR MANY DIFFERENCES WHEN
CONFRONTED BY BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES WITH THE

ARGUMENT THAT INDEPENDENCE WILL COME FASTER UNDER THE GENEVA FORMULA THAN THROUGH VICTORY IN THE FIELD. DURING LAST YEAR'S LONG WRANGLES ABOUT THE DATE OF INDEPENDENCE, THE NATIONALISTS ARGUED THAT THE PROPOSAL FOR MARCH 1, 1978, WAS TOO SLOW. NOW THE POSITION IN WASHINGTON IS THAT THIS IS BEGINNING TO LOOK UNREALISTICALLY OPTIMISTIC.

LAST WEEK MR. PHILIP HABIB, THE US UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS, TOLD CONGRESS THAT THE GUERRILLA WAR IN RHODESIA WILL BE "PROTRACTED." THE ORIGINAL ESTIMATE LAST SEPTEMBER WHEN DR. KISSINGER PERSUADED MR. SMITH TO ACCEPT THE FIVE-POINT PACKAGE WAS THAT IT WOULD GO ON FOR A YEAR OR TWO AT MOST.

THE ESTIMATES HAVE SINCE BEEN STRETCHED. ONE ELEMENT WAS THE DISUNITY OR FRAGMENTATION ON THE NATIONALIST SIDE, MR. HABIB SAID.

IN HIS TALKS WITH THE PRESIDENT LATER THIS WEEK, MR. CALLAGHAN'S MAIN CONCERN ON SOUTHERN AFRICA WILL BE TO GET MR. CARTER'S PERSONAL REASSURANCE THAT FROM NOW ON THERE WILL BE COMPLETE ANGLO-AMERICAN COORDINATION. DURING THE GENEVA TALKS BOTH THE NATIONALIST SIDE AND THE WHITE RHODESIANS TRIED TO EXPLOIT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WHITEHALL AND WASHINGTON, WITH THE BRITISH BEING PRESSED BY THE AFRICANS TO DEVELOP NEW AND MORE FAVORABLE TERMS FOR THEM, WHILE DR. KISSINGER WAS BEING ASKED BY MR. SMITH TO HOLD FIRM AGAINST COMMUNISM. THE AMERICANS HAVE NOW ACCEPTED THE BASIC BRITISH LINE

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THAT THE ALLEGED COMMUNIST DANGER IS LARGELY A PROPAGANDA PLOY BY MR. SMITH. NEVERTHELESS, FROM NOW ON THE MAIN FOCUS WILL BE ON THE NATIONALISTS. THE RECENT TALKS HELD BY BRITAIN'S TOP RHODESIAN EXPERT SIR ANTONY DUFF IN WASHINGTON HAVE NOT LED TO ANY DRAMATIC NEW INITIATIVE. BUT IN TRYING TO RESHUFFLE THE PACK OF ORIGINAL PROPOSALS THERE IS LIKELY TO BE MORE TALK NOW ABOUT THE NEED FOR ELECTIONS BEFORE INDEPENDENCE AND ABOUT THE SHAPE OF THE INDEPENDENCE CONSTITUTION. THESE IDEAS WERE GIVEN LITTLE EMPHASIS LAST YEAR. THE GENEVA TALKS DEALT MAINLY WITH THE NATURE OF THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT AND THE ACTUAL TRANSFER OF POWER.

DIPLOMATIC SOURCES HERE RULE OUT ANOTHER SHUTTLE FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. DIPLOMATS IN THE VARIOUS AFRICAN CAPITALS WHERE THE NATIONALISTS HAVE THEIR HEADQUARTERS WILL BE PRESSING THEM TO AGREE ON A COMMON LINE. BY EMPHASIZING THE NEED FOR ELECTIONS, THEY HOPE TO FORCE THE NATIONALISTS TO THINK MORE CONCRETELY ABOUT WHO REALLY REPRESENTS ZIMBABWE.

THE STRESS ON ELECTIONS MAY ALSO QUIETEN SOME OF THE
FEARS OF THE WHITE RHODESIANS AND THE SOUTH AFRICANS ABOUT
THE KIND OF GOVERNMENT THAT WILL EMERGE. IT ALSO DE-
LIBERATELY BLURS THE PUBLIC RELATIONS APPEAL OF MR. SMITH'
TALK ABOUT AN "INTERNAL" POLITICAL SOLUTION RATHER THAN A
GUERRILLA-IMPOSED TAKEOVER. END TEXT
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